

POSTAGE STAMPS

The Story of Their Making Is an Interesting One.

ENGRAVING THE STEEL DIES.

How This Delicate Work is Done and the Processes by Which the Designs Are Transferred to the Plates—Printing and Gumming the Sheets.

The manufacture of postage stamps involves a process not altogether simple. There is much labor given to the making of the little wafers with which everybody is so familiar. The first step toward the production of the stamp is, of course, the engraving of the die with which it is printed. Only steel of the finest quality is used for the purpose, and upon this the engravers slowly and laboriously cut line by line the portrait or the emblem that the government has selected for the particular stamp in hand.

Engravers call this die a "negative," for the reason that it is a reversal of the design that the stamp will exhibit.

Upon the completion of the die proofs are "pulled." Should these prove satisfactory the die is then hardened and fixed in the bed of a press of great power. Then a steel roller whose circumference is several times the diameter of the die is passed over it, immense pressure being applied, so that every line cut on the surface of the die may be impressed upon that of the roller as many times as the circumference of the roller is larger than the area of the die. The result is that there are reproduced on the roller four perfect copies of the die, but copies that are reversed. Engravers call these impressions "positives."

The next step is to harden the roller in order that it may give the impressions once more, this time to the plate from which the real printing is to be obtained. This plate, which is also of the finest steel, is of a size large enough to print a sheet of stamps, numbering from 200 to 300, at a single impression. Great pressure is brought to bear upon the surface of this plate, once for each stamp in the subsequent sheet, and then the plate is hardened. It follows, of course, that such impressions are "negatives" and that the prints obtained from them—the stamps themselves—are "positives."

It should be stated at this point that the reason why the printing is done in this way instead of from a single die lies in the fact that such enormous numbers of stamps are required. Then, too, the printing could not be done from the roller, inasmuch as on the roller the lines are in "relief" instead of being "incised." Furthermore, it would not be practicable to employ several dies or a great number of them engraved. The expense would be too great, and no two stamps would be absolutely alike.

When the workmen have obtained three satisfactory printing plates these are fastened to the bed of a special kind of printing press. Peculiar care is exercised in the process of taking. Upon the starting of the machinery the first plate is inked and wiped automatically until the plate fairly shines. This wiping takes away all the ink except that which clings to the lines of the 200 or 300 engravings.

The printers lay over the plate a sheet of dampened paper, a slight degree of heat is applied to the plate in order that the ink may "swell," and then more pressure is applied. During all this time the second plate has been receiving its ink, and subsequently the third is brought into action, with the result that, although all three plates are on the same press, each one of them is at a given moment undergoing a different process from its fellows.

When the printed sheets have been properly dried they are sent to a gumming machine. In this they are passed between a dry roller on one side and a roller moistened with mucilage on the other. From the rollers they emerge, wet side up, on to an endless web that conveys them through a steam heated box.

From this box they reappear to receive the perforations, which are made by passing the sheets between a cylinder provided with steel pins and a cylinder perforated with holes to match the pins.

The last step in the manufacture of the stamp is the pressing of the sheets to overcome their tendency to curl by reason of the mucilage used. This pressing is accomplished by hydraulic power.

The stamps are now ready for the postmaster.—Harper's Weekly.

Eating One's Boots.

"Rawhide or even leather, if boiled for hours, will make nutritious soup," says a writer in an exchange on the subject of what a man lost in the woods may find to eat. "Many a man has bridged the awful gap by boiling his boots, whence the phrase to express the final extreme, 'I'll eat my boots first.' Mark Twain was once put to this final resort and recorded afterward that 'the holes tasted the best.'"

Real Energy.

A scientific writer points out that the energy of the match is great enough to heat 7,500 times its weight in water 1 degree F. If this be true consider the energy contained in an artfully placed carpet tack!—New York Telegraph.

If you know how, a thing is not hard; if it is hard, then you don't know how.—Chinese Proverb.

Sick Women

When shown positive and reliable proof that a certain remedy had cured many cases of female ills, wouldn't any sensible woman conclude that the same remedy would also benefit her if suffering with the same trouble?

Here are five letters from southern women which prove the efficiency of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

LETTER FROM VIRGINIA.

Elliston, Va.—"I feel it my duty to express my thanks to you and your great medicine. I was a sufferer from female troubles and had been confined in bed over one third of my time for ten months. I could not do my housework and had fainting spells so that my husband could not leave me alone for five minutes at a time."

"Now I owe my health to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Blood Purifier. Whenever I see a suffering woman I want to tell her what these medicines have done for me and I will always speak a good word for them."—Mrs. ROBERT BLANKENSHIP, Elliston, Montgomery Co., Va.

LETTER FROM LOUISIANA.

New Orleans, La.—"I was passing through the Change of Life and before I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I was troubled with hot flashes, weak and dizzy feelings, backache and irregularities. I would get up in the morning feeling tired out and not fit to do anything. "Since I have been taking your Compound and Blood Purifier I feel all right. Your medicines are worth their weight in gold."—Mrs. GASTON BLONDEAU, 1541 Polymnia St., New Orleans, La.

LETTER FROM FLORIDA.

Wauchula, Fla.—"Some time ago I wrote to you giving you my symptoms, headache, backache, bearing-down, and discomfort in walking, caused by female troubles."

"I got two bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and a package of Sanative Wash and that was all I used to make me a well woman. "I am satisfied that if I had done like a good many women, and had not taken your remedies, I would have been a great sufferer. But I started in time with the right medicine and got well. It did not cost very much either. I feel that you are a friend to all women and I would rather use your remedies than have a doctor."—Mrs. MATTIE HODNOT, Box 406, Wauchula, Florida.

LETTER FROM WEST VIRGINIA.

Martinsburg, W. Va.—"I am glad to say that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done wonders for my mother, daughter and myself. "I have told dozens of people about it and my daughter says that when she hears a girl complaining with cramps, she tells her to take your Compound."—Mrs. MARY A. HOCKENBERRY, 712 N. 3rd St., Martinsburg, W. Va.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM VIRGINIA.

Newport News, Va.—"About five years ago I was troubled with such pains and bloating every month that I would have to go to bed."

"A friend told me to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I soon found relief. The medicine strengthened me in every way and my doctor approved of my taking it."

"I will be glad if my testimony will help some one who is suffering from female weakness."—Mrs. W. J. BLATTEN, 1059 Hampton Ave., Newport News, Va.

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